

UK LOCKSS Alliance Case Study London School of Economics

This case study is based on an interview with Lisa Cardy, Serials Manager at the London School of Economics (LSE) (September 2012).

Background to the UK LOCKSS Alliance

UK LOCKSS Alliance is a co-operative movement of UK academic libraries that deploy LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) technology to share archival responsibility through a network of local archives.

LOCKSS provides libraries with open-source software that enables them to:

- Set up a LOCKSS box that acts as the digital equivalent of a library shelf.
- Select content for preservation according to an institution's collection policies.
- Build an archive of content using the web-crawling capabilities of LOCKSS, taking content as it was rendered to the web.
- Take advantage of the LOCKSS automated preservation technology, designed so that almost no daily administration is needed to assure long-term access.
- Access preserved content when needed via integration with existing library and university systems.

LSE and its library

The LSE is one of the world's leading social science institutions, attracting students from throughout the world to study at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Its strong performance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) illustrates its rank as a research institution.

LSE Library is the largest in the world devoted exclusively to the social sciences, and one of only five National Research Libraries in England. Its collections have been 'designated' by the Arts Council as being of outstanding national and international importance.

The Library's journal collection includes scholarly titles such as the *BMJ* or *Nature*, as well as major collections of government and official publications from bodies such as the United Nations and the World Bank, which are essential primary source material for the social sciences.



Figure 1: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jiscimages/436446086/>

LSE's Participation in the UK LOCKSS Alliance

Social science research requires a large historical collection as researchers rely on access to volumes from the past as well as to current content. So preservation is important to LSE, particularly its collections of official publications many of which are unique.

The LSE initially joined the JISC-funded UK LOCKSS Pilot Programme in 2006 because they felt it was an important initiative which they should support, even though at that time the Library's primary focus remained on preserving their historical collections in print.

By 2011 that focus had shifted. It was clear that both library users and publishers favoured electronic over print for current journals, and LSE adopted an 'e-first' policy (<http://bit.ly/TYB5KC>) whereby the Library subscribes to the online journal in preference to print provided that it is no more expensive than print, is equally convenient for users, and that long-term access is secure.

Adopting this policy marked a shift in LSE's involvement with LOCKSS, and a greater focus on building a collection in their LOCKSS box. The cancellation of print subscriptions had reduced the burden of print check-in on library assistants. Thus, some of this newly available staff time was used to administer the collection preserved in the LOCKSS box.

Why use LOCKSS?

One of the keystones of the LSE's e-first policy is confidence in the preservation status of e-journals. The LOCKSS box contributes to that confidence, with staff outside the serials team now aware of the role and functions of the LOCKSS box.

Staff like the LOCKSS approach because:

- With a LOCKSS box, the content is stored in the library and can be shown to users. It's reassuring for users to see the content in the box as evidence that it is safely preserved and can be accessed.
- LOCKSS is simple. It serves one function well so the library pays for that service, rather than paying for a bundle of functionality, much of which it doesn't use.
- LOCKSS is independent of publishers and is supported by Jisc. Senior Management considers the Jisc endorsement to be a stamp of approval that reflects assurance and authority.
- LOCKSS is a global network, making it feel safer and more credible.

What value is derived from using LOCKSS?

The value of LOCKSS for the LSE lies primarily in provision of long-term preservation. The LSE does not often cancel subscriptions so is less concerned than some libraries about 'post-cancellation' access. But long-term preservation for current subscriptions is important where it relies on the electronic version.

LOCKSS therefore underpins and supports the LSE's e-first policy by providing a backup that can be accessed if something goes wrong. As today's students rely increasingly on e-resources, supporting this continuity of access is important.

What's involved in using LOCKSS?

When the library receives an email alert announcing that new content is available for preservation, a library assistant checks which publishers are included. If the list includes social science publishers, the library assistant identifies the titles of interest and relevance to the LSE and configures them for collection in the LOCKSS box. LOCKSS is used to preserve e-journals to which the library would not wish to lose access because they are part of the library's collection.

The LSE also refers to LOCKSS when selecting subscriptions that it wishes to move from print to e-only subscriptions.

E-first candidates are selected at the publisher level rather than on a title-by-title basis, so as a first step the library checks whether a particular

publisher participates in LOCKSS or other relevant archiving agencies.

In the first year of its e-first policy, the LSE targeted large publishers. Support for archiving is a now standard requirement for publishers who participate in the national NESLi2 e-journal deals, so LSE found that many titles were preserved by LOCKSS or other relevant archiving initiatives in which the LSE is involved. However, LSE staff suspect that smaller publishers with fewer titles may be less likely to participate in the archiving initiatives.

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Improving the LOCKSS software

Staff like the simplicity of the LOCKSS system and forthcoming software improvements will assist staff workflows. Scheduled for Summer 2013, the LOCKSS developers are introducing a Subscription Manager feature that will simplify the content administration process by allowing staff to easily define titles and publishers for collection based on library catalogue information.

A new content status interface is in development, simplifying the status report functionality currently available to staff. To rely on LOCKSS as a secure archive of e-journals, staff need quick and accurate confirmation that content is stored. Clearer user interface dialogues will make it easier to understand the actions required to ensure that content is safe and preserved. If the institution's LOCKSS box fails to collect a title, staff would like to clearly understand what has happened to inform follow-up action.

Finally, the LSE library would like to archive their e-book holdings. Infrastructure to support e-books has been implemented in the LOCKSS software, and discussion with individual publishers is ongoing to make e-book platforms compliant with the LOCKSS software.